

VZCZCXRO4216
PP RUEHSL
DE RUEHUP #0501/01 1911303
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 101303Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4311
INFO RUEHSL/AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA 0001
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUDAPEST 000501

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR S/GC AND EUR/CE JAMIE LAMORE. PLEASE PASS TO
NSC FOR JEFF HOVENIER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/09/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [OFDP](#) [LO](#) [HU](#)

SUBJECT: HUNGARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER'S MEETING WITH CHARGE

REF: A. BUDAPEST 461

[B](#). BUDAPEST 411

[C](#). BUDAPEST 429

[D](#). STATE 70576

Classified By: Acting P/E Counselor Jon Martinson, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#). (SBU) Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Balazs requested a meeting with Charge July 9 to discuss three topics: Guantanamo detainees; Hungarian Ambassador to the U.S.; and relations with Slovakia. Concerning Guantanamo detainees, the FM said that the Government will decide before the end of July whether to accept detainees as well as the way forward to implement the decision. Balazs also confirmed that he will replace Hungary's U.S. Ambassador Ferenc Somogyi with Bela Szombati this summer. On relations with Slovakia, Balazs commented that bi-lateral relations "for the moment, are at a dead-end." Demarche on the President's meeting with Russian President Medvedev was delivered. End summary.

Guantanamo Detainee Decision Soon

[2](#). (C) Responding to Foreign Minister Peter Balazs's request, Charge Hurley met with the FM on July 9. Balazs began with the subject of Guantanamo detainees. He said that Hungarian National Security Service personnel are currently reviewing the five files recently provided by Ambassador Fried (ref A), and the GOH intends to take a yet-undetermined decision as soon as possible to outline a plan of action. Noting that "technical issues" are relatively easy to address, Balazs commented that there is "the magic line of politics," and political issues are swirling in "deep, troubled waters."

[3](#). (C) Continuing, Balazs said that, after "shaping the decision" as to the number and names of acceptable detainees, he will discuss the way forward with the Prime Minister - unilaterally or in coordination with the opposition. He stated that he prefers a unilateral approach, with the GOH bearing responsibility alone for the decision without dialogue with the opposition. Noting that the summer "uborka season" diminishes public attention on politics, the FM said the GOH is moving towards a late July decision.

New Ambassador in Washington

[4](#). (C) Balazs confirmed that he notified current Ambassador Ferenc Somogyi that he will be replaced this summer by Bela Szombati. Highlighting the fact that there is "a new government in Washington and a new government in Budapest," Balazs said that "new tasks and new challenges" make the change logical. He said we are sending the best possible person to Washington to be sure we are meeting all

requirements. Szombati is "young and dynamic," speaks English and French, and previously served in two very important posts as Ambassador - Paris and London. Balazs also raised the issue of Somogyi's health as a factor in the decision to change Ambassadors. The FM noted that Somogyi recently has suffered occasional short-term memory loss, and is sometimes mildly depressed. (Comment. That said, concern for these health issues apparently was not, if at all, key to the change, as Balazs said Somogyi has accepted a new posting as Hungary's Ambassador to Singapore. End comment.)

Slovakia - Our Biggest Concern

15. (C) Stating that his goal is to "start a new chapter" in the relationship with Slovakia, in particular with Slovakia's new Foreign Minister, Balazs highlighted a number of joint committees he hopes will help strengthen bi-lateral cooperation and understanding between the two governments. He also expressed hope that he can diffuse the usage of "radical labels" when the Slovak government comments on its neighbor to the south, commenting that Slovak officials tend to "ignore our messages" and only react to Viktor Orban (ref B), the Magyar Garda and Jobbik. However, stating the "he sees only friends" when looking at Hungary's seven neighboring countries, Balazs expressed sorrow that the recent language law passed by the Slovak legislature finds the situation with Slovakia "for the moment, at a dead-end."

16. (C) Comment. Concerning the Guantanamo detainee issue, the toughest question yet to be answered internally by the

BUDAPEST 00000501 002 OF 002

GOH is whether or not to go-it-alone without consulting opposition Fidesz leadership. Fidesz President Viktor Orban has already clearly stated his opposition to accepting detainees in a letter to former Ambassador Foley before she departed Post. However, unlike former Prime Minister Gyurcsany, who made four-party consensus a key element in the decision to accept detainees, Prime Minister Bajnai has not established the same criteria. Balazs' support for a "unilateral" decision echoes MFA State Secretary Varkonyi's comments during Ambassador Fried's visit. With Fidesz raising the issue of potential threats to public safety and security if detainees were accepted, it remains to be seen if Socialist MPs will be willing to back a unilateral decision, even with Socialist Party faction leader Attila Mesterhazy's comments to Ambassador Fried that he will "deliver" Socialist support for a positive decision. While the outlook for the Socialists in the upcoming national elections is dim, Socialist MPs who are also mayors may be less inclined to support accepting detainees, having to face their constituents at home.

17. (C) Comment continued. Hungary's relationship with Slovakia remains problematic, with the recently passed language law the prime reason for the cancellation of the planned July meeting between the two Prime Ministers. While the Foreign Minister laments Slovakia's reactions to the more conservative and far-right voices emanating from across the Danube, such Hungarian voices contribute to the mistrust. Fidesz President Viktor Orban's recent comments about representation in the European Parliament for Hungarians in the Carpathian basin, coupled with the extreme-right Jobbik Party's new EP member (ref C) Krisztina Morvai's call for a symposium to address the human rights aspects of the Trianon treaty, only fan the flames of ethnic tension between the two countries. End comment.

18. (U) Closing out the meeting, the Charge took the opportunity to deliver the ref D demarche to the Foreign Minister. The FM was grateful to receive the demarche, but had no immediate comments.
Hurley